



# SafeRoutes News

The Safe Routes To Schools Newsletter Spring 2007

## SCHOOLPOOL A HIT AT MILL VALLEY'S EDNA MAGUIRE SCHOOL

### An Interview with Team Leader Deborah Cole

Volunteer Team Leaders are the heart of any Safe Routes to Schools (SR2S) program. Deborah Cole, a parent at Edna Maguire School in Mill Valley, has been volunteering for SR2S and became the Team Leader at the beginning of this school year. She pored through the program guidebooks and decided to combine the Golden Sneaker Award with the SchoolPool program. It turned out to be a winning combination.

The Golden Sneaker Award is a classroom competition that tracks the number of times students walk, bike or carpool to school and rewards the class that has the most participation. SchoolPool allows Team Leaders to match up parents so they can share the responsibilities of transporting their children to school, whether by walking, biking or carpooling.

**SR2S: Did you start both programs at the same time?**

DC: No, our strategy was to ramp up gradually. We started with a regular Walk and Roll to School Day the first Thursday of the month. Then we began the Golden Sneaker contest in November. After Thanksgiving, I sent letters out and distributed the survey from the SchoolPool guide.

**SR2S: How did school staff participate in the program?**

DC: Lisa Zimmerman, our principal, saw this as a major way to impact the number of cars coming to the school. She immediately embraced the programs, has approved everything I've presented to her and gives great suggestions from her experience of what works with kids. She shows up at events and makes a big deal about the Golden Sneaker Award at the assemblies too.

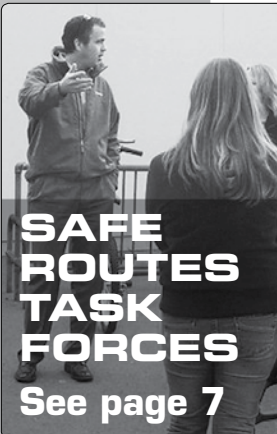
Leslie Fielder, the school's administrative assistant, made the Golden Sneaker charts that allow students to mark off each time they walk, bike, carpool or take the bus to school. I tried to make it easy on the teachers by letting the students mark off the charts on their own and by running the contest every other month.

**SR2S: Has the school community responded well?**

DC: Golden Sneaker has been a big hit. The kids are so excited about it. They want to win the Golden Sneaker for their room. They go home and urge their parents to carpool so they can win the sneaker. The parents are responding really well. [CONTINUED ON PAGE 3]

**MILLER CREEK STUDENTS PRESENT TO SCHOOL BOARD**

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**SAFE ROUTES TASK FORCES**

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Team Leader Deborah Cole with students from Edna MacGuire School. Photo: Jeremy Thornton

### Safe Routes to Schools

A program of the  
Transportation Authority  
of Marin

3501 Civic Center Dr.  
San Rafael, CA 94913  
[www.tam.ca.gov](http://www.tam.ca.gov)

Project Manager:

David Parisi  
415-388-8978  
[david@parisi-associates.com](mailto:david@parisi-associates.com)

### For general information on the program:

Program Director:

Wendi Kallins  
415-488-4101  
[wendi@marinbike.org](mailto:wendi@marinbike.org)

### For information on school activities and classes:

Project Coordinator:

Kristin Nute  
415-456-3469 ext. 5#  
[kristin@marinbike.org](mailto:kristin@marinbike.org)

Teen Coordinator:

Aviva Joseph  
415-456-3469 ext. ??  
[aviva@marinbike.org](mailto:aviva@marinbike.org)

### SafeRoutes News

Editor: Wendi Kallins

Copy Editor: Connie Breeze

Design: Jeremy Thornton

Contributors: Wendi Kallins,

David Parisi, Perry King,

Aviva Joseph

Additional Editing:

Eric Schatmeier, Carey Lando

# UPDATE ON NEW SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOLS INFRASTRUCTURE

Funding from the California Safe Routes to Schools program has improved access and safety around three Marin schools in the past year

## Manor School, White Hill Middle School and St Rita and Cascade Canyon private schools

① Fairfax completed sidewalks on Sir Francis Drake Boulevard between Marin Drive and Olema Road, a key gap in sidewalk facilities along busy Sir Francis Drake. Other phases of the project will improve the intersection at Marin Drive and Sir Francis Drake Blvd. and construct a pedestrian bridge over the creek into the Bothin Road and Scenic Road neighborhoods for students accessing Manor School, White Hill Middle School and St Rita and Cascade Canyon private schools.



## Bahia Vista School

② The Public Works Department of San Rafael just put the finishing touches on this project that created raised crosswalks in front of Bahia Vista School with curb extensions. The project also improved the Bahia and Canal Street intersection in front of the Pickleweed Community Center with high-visibility crosswalks and curb extensions.



## Vallecito School

③ A new crosswalk in front of Vallecito School in the Terra Linda area of San Rafael will allow the large number of students who live in apartments across the street to get to school safely. The Dixie School district is extending the crosswalk through the school parking lot as part of a partnership between the district and the city. The project also includes a permanent speed-feedback sign to alert drivers to their excessive speed. The Dixie School district also built a new walkway that bypasses the school parking lot for students coming from the east on Nova Albion.



## SAFE PATHWAYS: "CALL FOR PROJECTS"



The Transportation Authority of Marin will soon issue a \$1.3 million "call for projects" for the Safe Pathways element of the Safe Routes to School program. The Safe Pathways program provides funds to design and construct capital projects that are identified in Safe Routes Plans developed under the Safe Routes to Schools program. After this initial round of projects, funding for Safe Pathways is expected to be about \$500,000 per year.

For more information on TAM projects go to [www.tam.ca.gov](http://www.tam.ca.gov)

# SPRING CONTESTS BEGIN IN APRIL

Starting in April, 27 schools will be promoting walking and biking through either the Frequent Rider Miles or Pollution Punch Card contests organized by Safe Routes to Schools. This year's prizes at each school include a new bike from Marin Bikes, provided at cost and paid for by a grant from Kaiser Permanente. Other prizes include backpacks that light up provided by Land's End, locks and lights from Planet Bike, new helmets from the YMCA in San Francisco, and water-bottle packages from REI.

Each contest encourages children and their parents to choose a travel mode other than driving a solo child to school. When students complete their cards, they get instant rewards plus a raffle ticket giving them a chance to win bigger prizes. Frequent Rider Miles asks children to track every time they walk, bike, bus or carpool to school. The Pollution Punch Card has an environmental theme; volunteers punch out the "pollution gremlin" on random, unannounced days as well as on scheduled Walk and Bike to School Days if they walk or bike to school. Both contests come with guidebooks, posters, flyers, small rewards, and a set of prizes for each school. Learn more about SR2S contests at [www.tam.ca.gov](http://www.tam.ca.gov). Click on the SR2S logo and then the Education and encouragement button.

If you would like your school to participate in next year's contest, please e-mail Kristin Nute at [Kristin@marinbike.org](mailto:Kristin@marinbike.org)

## INTERVIEW WITH DEBORAH COLE [CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE]



*Deborah Cole believes that the SchoolPool combined with contests and events can make real changes to parent's travel behavior.*

### SR2S: How did you organize the SchoolPool program?

DC: I got about 60 SchoolPool surveys back. I invited those respondents to a SchoolPool tea where people were seated by neighborhood with organizing information from the guidebook at each table. After a brief presentation, I let people work together to organize their neighborhoods. I've recruited neighborhood organizers. Some of these are people new to the community who are using SchoolPool as a way to meet their neighbors. I've also done a bit of matchmaking on my own, by calling parents I know and asking them if they'd be willing to pick up another student on their way to school.

Some neighborhoods start with walk-and-bike pools and then switch to carpooling when it rains. For carpooling, I've suggested that the first time a parent drives, the other parent rides along so the two can get to know each other, and so each can gain confidence that their kids are being transported by safe drivers.

### SR2S: How have you promoted the program?

DC: I have a background in marketing. I've been treating my efforts to promote SR2S as advertising. I know that repetition is the key to any good marketing campaign, so I put flyers in the weekly backpack mail, using samples from the Safe Routes to Schools guidebooks. I know it is having an effect. Even if parents don't participate in the beginning, it brings the idea of SchoolPooling to their consciousness. I believe we've achieved word-of-mouth phase. We've raised awareness. The whole school is getting behind it.

### SR2S: How successful have you been in changing behavior?

DC: The Golden Sneaker contest has been a huge success. Most of the classes have increased walking, biking or carpooling by 30% to 150%. It's the most stunning thing to see what some kids did in January. One 3rd grade class went from an average of about 6 kids walking, biking or carpooling a day in September to 12 a day in January. Some days they have 14 kids. Second grade had 2 a day last fall. Now it's 9 a day average in January. It is fair to say there are about 80 to 90 more students walking and rolling per day. It's really working.

### SR2S: What are your plans for the future?

DC: Next year I'll kick off SchoolPool at the beginning of the year. I think we can accomplish more in the first weeks of school. I will provide a letter for the principal to send out, encouraging people to SchoolPool. When parents get it from her, they see it as something they should do, that this is what we do at Edna Maguire School. Then we'll hit the ground running with organizers. I know now what works and how to make it work more efficiently.

*Deborah wants to share her success with other Team Leaders. She has put together a notebook of every step she has taken so that other Safe Routes to Schools Team Leaders can learn from her experience. For more information, e-mail her at [dcole3@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dcole3@sbcglobal.net). To download the SR2S guidebooks go to [www.tam.ca.gov](http://www.tam.ca.gov) or e-mail [Kristin@marinbike.org](mailto:Kristin@marinbike.org).*





# INTERNATIONAL WALK TO SCHOOL DAY A HUGE SUCCESS AT TAM VALLEY SCHOOL

By Perry King, Tam Valley Team Leader



Photo: Jack Detjen-Cr son

For seven years I have been organizing the volunteers who stage Tam Valley's International Walk to School Day every October. Last year, the children who accompany the fire trucks were so excited that they stepped off the sidewalks to hold banners and walk with their friends. This raised an issue of safety as the children were walking in the middle of Bell Lane. So this year, I decided to close the street altogether. We organized a big official parade, obtained a parade permit and blocked off Bell Lane, the main street to Tam Valley School. Then we marched from Bell Market, approximately a half mile away.

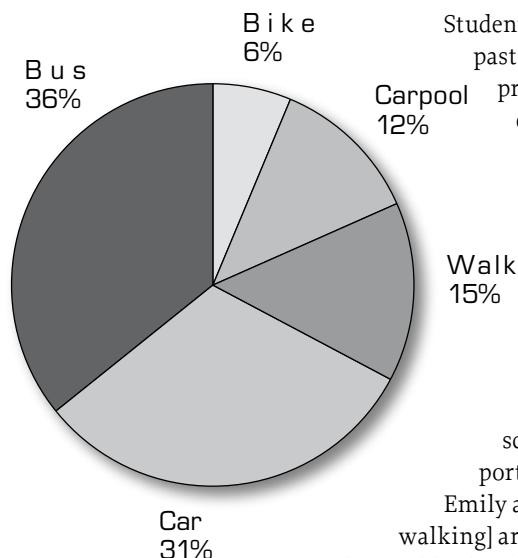
This required more organization, but thanks to volunteer help and the local community services district, which applied for the permit and printed banners, we had nearly 450 children and parents walking to school that day. Because we were required to publicize the street closing 48

hours in advance, practically all of Tam Valley and much of Mill Valley saw the signage and knew to plan trips accordingly. We put out notes reminding car owners to move their vehicles before the parade, and they were graciously received. We even had calls from neighbors asking for our advice as to when they should leave for work.

As I arrived at Bell Market at 7:30 a.m. on Parade Day and saw the first five-year-old child holding a cute umbrella, I asked the weather powers to please hold off on the rain that was beginning to dampen the roads. The commitment, enthusiasm and smiling faces of the children and parents made the organizational effort all worthwhile.

Special thanks to County Supervisor Charles McGlashan, teachers (who parked outside the lot), Principal Mrs. Van Adelsberg, the California Highway Patrol, the County Sheriff's Office, the Fire Department and paramedics, after-school coordinator Tia Smirnoff, the Tam Valley Improvement Club, the Tamalpais Community Service District's Safety and Revitalization Board, and all of the amazing school and community volunteers. It was absolutely fantastic!

## MILLER CREEK STUDENTS PRESENT SURVEY RESULTS AT SCHOOL BOARD MEETING



Students from the Miller Creek Middle School's Safe Routes to Schools club have been busy these past few months. They've been meeting during lunch periods to learn about, discuss and promote more biking and walking in their school. Their commitment follows the strong example set by 8th grade science teacher Mike Schulist, whose tireless dedication to promoting alternative transportation is demonstrated by his three years of work with the Safe Routes club and his empowerment of students to make change in their lives and in the life of their community.

Emily, one of the students in the club, says, "I feel strongly about having Safe Routes to school, and about the human impact on the environment." Hannah, another student, explains, "I find that walking and biking to school is important because it helps take some of the everyday pollution out of the air. I walk to school every day and it helps me wake up and I feel good about it."

Students in the club want to make the benefits of walking and biking known in their school so that increasing numbers of students will start to choose these modes of transportation. They designed a transportation survey and interviewed students at Miller Creek.

Emily assisted in the survey's design. "The main problems in our school [for students biking and walking] are safety-related," she says. "Parents and children both worry about traffic, unsafe areas of the neighborhood, large roads and intersections, and the health effects of walking or riding with a backpack weighing over thirty pounds."

Students in the club interviewed peers about why they don't walk and bike. After analyzing the interview results, they prepared a presentation for the school board with the help of [CONTINUED ON BACK PAGE]

# REDWOOD TEEN PROMOTES GREEN TRANSPORTATION

An interview with Karen Whitstone

Karen Whitstone, a junior at Redwood High School, has been a committed Safe Routes to Schools intern for the past year. As an intern, she assists Safe Routes to Schools in promoting walking, biking and carpooling through the Environmental Club at Redwood. She first decided to get involved after seeing a presentation by Safe Routes to Schools' former Teen Coordinator, Melanie Grubman, during Joe Stewart's ecology class last year. This year Melanie's successor, Aviva Joseph, continues to work with Karen.

"I have an appreciation for community life," Karen said. "When I got to high school, I noticed that I could make a difference by setting an example. I live close to the school and I can bike so I do. I can walk the talk."

Working with Safe Routes, Karen explained, has helped her gain knowledge necessary for bringing about changes in her school. It gave her a sense of purpose. "I want to help increase student use of alternative transportation to school, primarily biking and walking but carpooling and public transportation as well," she said.

She's learned that this task is not easy. "Teenagers who drive or are driven to school have a preconceived idea of what is socially accepted. Society defines liberty as having a car. Our promotion of alternative transportation can come across as a domineering parental figure that takes away their liberty. We need to pay attention in our campaigns so we don't become like that."

This is a challenging issue far beyond the boundaries of Redwood High School, but Karen has a vision and hope that things can and will change. With Aviva's help, she is creating a student survey and gathering baseline information needed for a travel plan. She will work through the Environmental Club to run the Frequent Rider Miles contest (see contest article, page 3) in the spring. She also wants to help create a neighborhood directory so that students and their parents can find carpool mates to decrease the number of cars coming to school.

Before she leaves Redwood, Karen hopes to see fewer cars in the parking lot, and more students getting to know where other students live through the use of the neighborhood directory. She gets excited when she thinks of "more students being supportive of this work, when they start making their own decisions about transportation. I can already see some difference."



**"I want to help increase student use of alternative transportation to school, primarily biking and walking but carpooling and public transportation as well."**

## SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOLS PROGRAM EVALUATION

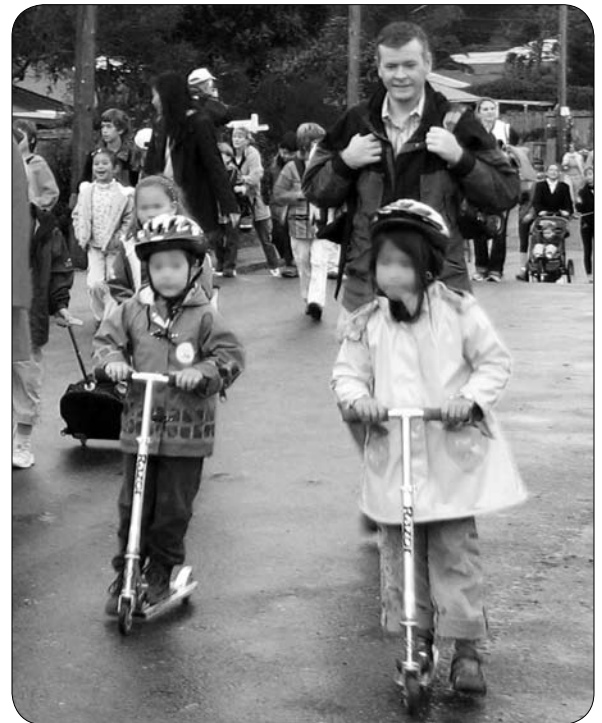
According to a survey conducted last year, parents are responding favorably to the Safe Routes to Schools program. The survey results show that the program led to a 19% reduction in single-student auto trips, that 75% of the respondents are interested in carpooling, and over 30% would allow their child to walk or bicycle to school if accompanied by another parent or other children.

The survey was one piece of a comprehensive evaluation of the program conducted by Nelson/Nygaard Consulting Associates. The countywide survey of parents provided the primary evaluation tool. The survey, conducted in both English and Spanish, had responses from parents representing 480 students from 51 schools throughout Marin County. Parents were queried on their children's grade level(s), travel modes to and from school, reasons for driving to school, and willingness to carpool, walk or bicycle. In addition parents were asked about their level of awareness of the Safe Routes to School program and its influence on travel-mode choice.

The evaluation also included a review of peer programs, including other programs in the United States, British Columbia's "Way to Go!" program, and the United Kingdom's "Sustrans" program.

Recommendations to further improve the program include: expanding it to schools that do not currently participate; sustaining and increasing volunteer participation and enthusiasm; increasing transit use; promoting carpooling; and continuing to remove barriers to walking and bicycling. TAM's Safe Pathways program will provide infrastructure funding to improve the routes to schools.

The evaluation can be seen on TAM's website ([www.tam.ca.gov/](http://www.tam.ca.gov/)).



*Walk to school Day photo: Jack Detjen-Gréson*

# PARTNERSHIP IN NOVATO INCREASES CROSSING GUARDS

## TAM, City of Novato and Novato School District Share Costs

### SAFE ROUTES QUIZ

#### Why are some crosswalks yellow?

The color yellow is used in California for crosswalks that are contiguous to school buildings or school grounds.

For several years, the City of Novato and the Novato Unified School District shared costs of providing school crossing guards to Novato schools. When Measure A Transportation Sales Tax funds began to be used to provide these crossing guards through the Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM), both the City and the School District saw an opportunity to add more crossing guards at new locations.

The TAM Crossing Guard Program establishes criteria for eligible guard locations. The most important criteria are the amount of traffic on the road and the number of children in the crosswalks. Locations with the most traffic and pedestrians are included in the TAM program. Novato Safe Routes to School volunteers also identified locations where conditions don't meet TAM's criteria but having a crossing guard would encourage even more children to walk and bike to school.

At the December 2006 Novato Safe Routes to Schools Task Force meeting, city councilmember Pat Eklund explained that Novato had set aside funds for crossing guards to supplement TAM's Measure A funds. Kathy Marshall, Executive Director of Curriculum for the Novato Unified School District (NUSD), provided a current list of all crossing guards and locations where they felt crossing guards were still needed. To supplement TAM's Crossing Guard Program, NUSD and the city decided to continue their partnership by each providing equal funds to provide even more guards for Novato's school children. "We did this to ensure student safety at all locations," said Kathy Marshall. Because the Novato program uses the same company to administer their crossing guards—All City Management Services—as the TAM Crossing Guard program, the city is able to keep program costs down. Other school districts, such as Larkspur and Reed, have also funded school staff at some of their crossing guard locations to supplement the TAM program.

The new locations added to the Novato program are:

- Olive and Summers Ave.
- Main Gate Road and Martin Drive
- Ignacio Blvd. and Sunset Parkway
- Wilson Ave. and crosswalk to ball field
- Sutro and Dominic Streets
- Olive and Westwood Ave.

The city now has 18 crossing guards, double the number that existed before the TAM program was put in place. Eklund, the City council representative on the task force, expressed her satisfaction with the arrangements. "This shows a true partnership between the City and the School District," she said.



Longtime Novato resident Walter Bertsch enjoys helping children cross the street safely.

# TASK FORCES DEVELOP PLANS FOR IMPROVING SAFETY FOR SCHOOLS



*Traffic Engineer David Parisi listens to concerns about speeding cars on Peach Street from parents at Olive School.*

Communities across Marin are collaborating on ways to make it safer and more attractive for children to walk and bike to school. Community Task Forces have been working in Mill Valley, Ross Valley, and San Rafael's Sun Valley School area for over a year. Novato's Task Force has been meeting for more than two years. New efforts are underway in Larkspur/Corte Madera, Tiburon, Marinwood, and the Canal area of San Rafael. Some of these efforts focus solely on developing a Safe Routes to Schools Travel Plan, while others use the opportunity to bring people together to increase safety and decrease traffic in their communities. These task forces include elected representatives from the city and the school district; school district, police and public works staff; neighbors; and SR2S school Team Leaders.

The School Travel Plans will describe specific physical improvements needed for each school. In addition, they will include details on enforcement, educational and encouragement programs, both ongoing and planned, to reduce car traffic and increase walking, biking, carpooling and transit travel." With these programs documented, succeeding Team Leaders, school officials and staff members will have guidance to keep their programs alive for the future.

Ongoing Task Force activity highlights include:

## Engineering

Walkabouts are used to define safety issues around schools. School volunteers take the Safe Routes to Schools engineer and city staff on a walk around the school to show where safety concerns impede the ability of children to walk and bike to school. The SR2S engineering team then provides design concepts that can be used to solicit grants.

San Ramon and Olive School in Novato conducted walkabouts this winter. Sun Valley School representatives are reviewing designs for their school and are requesting further field studies.

The Marinwood Homeowners Association has a Safe Routes to Schools committee that developed a draft non-motorized transportation plan on its own. Its authors are also team leaders at Mary Silveira and Dixie schools. Safe Routes to Schools staff met with the authors to determine if this plan can be used as a framework for a School Travel Plan. Safe Routes to Schools was provided with a copy of the plan for review.

## Education

In Ross Valley, the Task Force developed a Bike Pledge form that alerts parents and their children of the need to ride safely, wear helmets and obey the rules of the road. This form will be used to make sure that both parents and children have read and understood their responsibilities to keep themselves safe while riding a bicycle to school. The Task Force will then work with local police departments to develop a Share the Road campaign to increase driver awareness of kids on bikes.

The cities of Mill Valley, Larkspur and Corte Madera are exploring the possibility of participating as demonstration communities for TAM's Street Smarts Program, a driver-awareness and education campaign designed to make streets safer. This program, developed by the City of San Jose, uses focus-group-tested signs and banners along with neighborhood and school presentations to raise the consciousness of the community to improve driver behavior.

## Enforcement

Novato and Mill Valley police departments reported to their respective Task Forces that they instituted a pedestrian decoy program. The program is designed to increase driver awareness of pedestrians who are legally crossing the street in a marked crosswalk. Employees of the Police Department, acting as typical pedestrians, cross the street in a marked crosswalk when a vehicle is 165 feet away. This distance offers the driver ample time to perceive, react and stop his vehicle. If a driver encroaches on the pedestrian right of way in the crosswalk, a uniformed police officer issues a ticket.

To get involved in a community task force or to form one for your school, e-mail Wendi Kallins at [wendi@marinbike.org](mailto:wendi@marinbike.org).

**Children who walk and bike to school arrive awake and ready to learn.**



*Intersection improvements at Bahia and Canal in front of the Pickleweed Community Center.*

**To find out more about forming a Safe Routes to Schools Task Force in your community, e-mail Wendi at [Wendi@marinbike.org](mailto:Wendi@marinbike.org)**



Measure A, Marin's half-cent transportation sales tax, provides funding for Safe Routes to School programs in all Marin schools. If your school is not currently participating, please see the TAM web site, [www.tam.ca.gov](http://www.tam.ca.gov), or e-mail [wendi@marinbike.org](mailto:wendi@marinbike.org) to learn how you can join the program.

## JOIN THE HUMAN-POWERED PARADE

A message from Renée Goddard, Manor School team leader



**ATTENTION...** All biking, walking and otherwise human-powered people! Fairfax will celebrate the 30th year of its fantastic festival with the always colorful and innovative Fairfax Festival parade on **Saturday, June 9.**

The Eco-fest in the Fairfax Pavilion has become the fun green destination for families attending the festival, and its theme this year will be Climate Change. The Eco-fest includes booths and information tables from environmental organizations and businesses from throughout Marin. To raise awareness in the community for the need to create alternative transportation and to celebrate our feet and non-motorized wheels, we will have a Human-Powered section of the Fairfax Festival Parade. In this section of the parade, we will invite participants to create an eco-themed float powered only with feet and hands (no fossil fuels).

### We need everyone's participation

Our children are leading the way by walking and biking to school in unprecedented numbers. We know how children's creativity and energy can steer us all in amazing directions. To bring visibility to their efforts and respond to our climate crisis in a positive and proactive way, we invite all to join and support the Human-Powered Parade. Create a float as an entry for your school that celebrates human mobility and the power of our feet.

**For information or to share your ideas please call Renée Goddard at 497-5134 or e-mail her at [sa98sha@aol.com](mailto:sa98sha@aol.com).** *Photo: Human Powered Parade in Fairfax, October 2005*

### MILLER CREEK STUDENTS: [CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4]

Mr. Schulist, parent Kel Harris from the Marinwood Homeowners' Association (and SR2S team leader at Dixie School), and Aviva Joseph, Teen Coordinator for Safe Routes to School.

"The goal of our presentation," says Emily, "was to bring these problems to the attention of the school board, propose possible solutions, and let the board know that students care enough about this issue to want to make a difference, and that we need their help."

"I hope the school board will seriously consider the information we presented, and collaborate with us," Hannah says. "Our parents are driving everywhere now, but when we grow up we're going to be left with the effects, such as global warming among other things." Perhaps this young generation's words and actions will inspire others to make choices sustainable not only for themselves, but for future generations.



**SAFE ROUTES  
TO SCHOOLS**  
MARIN COUNTY

A program of the Transportation Authority of Marin

P.O. Box 1115, Fairfax, CA 94978

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